THREE PRAYERS.

An infant in its cradle slept,
And in its sleep it smiled—
And one by one three women knelt
To kiss the fair-haired child;
And each thought of the days to be
And breathed a prayer, half-silently.

One poured her love on many lives,
But knew love's toil and care;
Its burdens oft had been to her
A heavy weight to bear;
She stooped and murmured lovingly:
"Not burdened hands, dear child, for thee."

One had not known the burdened hands,
But knew the empty heart;
At life's banquet she had sat
An unfed guest apart;
"Oh, not," she whispered, tenderly.
"An empty heart, dear child, for thee."

And one was old; she had known care,
She had known loneliness;
She knew God leads us by no path
His presence cannot bless:
She smiled, and murmured, trustfully;
"God's will, dear child, God's will for thee!"

—Kate Tucker Goode, in the Alkahest.

By CHAUNCY C. HOTCHKISS

CHAPTER XI.—CONTINUED.

Not a morsel of food had passed my lips for more than four-and-twenty hours. I was tired, not from the miles of walking or manifold exertion, but from lack of nutriment, and, more than all, from the moral effect of knowing I was being hunted like a wild animal. My clothing had well-nigh dried on my body, but I was still damp. I had not even the comfort of tobacco, for, though I possessed it in plenty, I could get no fire, my tinder box having been wetted in the soaking I had endured. I had fled from the sight of man as Satan flies before the sign of the cross, but by the time I had gotten on my journey thus far I cared little for Nick Stryker, Rex, the British army, or the devil himself. My sole yearning was for food, and the sun had not sunken fairly behind the Jersey hills when, against all reason, I rose from my last hiding place near the roadside and strode into it, making my way toward the tavern as fast as I could walk.

My arms were like lead. The gold in my pockets and the bullets in my pouch had fifty times their weight as I splashed through the mud, but I was protected by a divine providence, for no soul saw I going or coming while I was on the great thoroughfare. When I turned into the lane leading to the tavern some of my reason returned to me, and I slipped over the fence that I might not approach too directly the front door. There were no horses under the shed as I passed it, a fact that gave me assurance, and on peering through the bar window, I marked that the room was unoccupied.

The bar of the Dove was, like many of the taverns of the day, as much a refectory as a bar, and the general assembly room of the house. As I have said, it was deserted, and barren of light as well, the far corners being so immersed in gloom that I could hardly make out the tables under the curtained windows. My advent within brought an answering sound of steps, and there entered a black man, half waiter and half hostler, as I made out by his apron, the table knives in his hand, and a general smell of the stable he brought with him.

Without ado I asked for food—food of any sort, hot or cold, with a bottle of wine, or, failing in that, stimulant of any description. I thought the fellow was frightened at my fierceness, and showed him I meant to pay for all I demanded by pulling from my pocket a few pieces of gold and exposing them. He slipped behind the bar and brought out a bottle of rum, setting it on a table in the darkest corner of the room, and then hurriedly went out, saying I should be served without delay.

Left to myself, I took a stiff dram and looked about me. The room was decidedly

"I crept slowly onward."

barren in appearance, the only attempt at ornamentation being in the boughs of green stuff that had been piled into the vast fireplace. The rafters overhead, somber with age, were black in the increasing darkness, and the walls, unwhitened for months and perhaps years, were deeply scored with names and coarse mottoes graven by sword points or bayonets, and smutted by candles held against the rough plaster. The bar took up a space near the entrance, the floor was clean and sanded, and the only furniture in the room consisted of an immense settle in the corner by the chimney, one long table with a bench betwixt it and the wall, and four or five smaller tables with accompanying chairs. In strong contrast with the prevailing dinginess of the apartment were the two windows in the rear of the room, their curtains of plain stuff as white and stiff as crusted snow, and the panes as sparkling and brilliant as newly minted coin.

With an eye to future action in case of mischance, I went to the windows and found them unfastened. The view looked east and showed an infield with a stream on one side, which I knew must drain the ponds and swamps of the lower Harlem flats in the vicinity of McGowan's Pass, and empty itself culverted, as it runs under the city in the into the Sound river. (This stream, now neighborhood of East One Hundred and Tenth street.)

The sight of its brush-grown banks and the gathering night suggested a way of escape, but a boat would have been necessary, and even with this there were the jaws of Hell Gate and the river patrols to overcome.

I think I had plumbed the depths of every possible chance to get off the island and on to the main, but saw no way out. The Hudson was too wide to swim; the Sound river too boisterous in either run of the tide, and even better guarded than was the land. To pass the Harlem was not possible, both banks being sentried by the enemy, and thus I was held betwixt the "barrier gates," the lower lines, and the two rivers. In time every foot of this ground would be scoured, and the end looked to be that I would succumb.

But the end was not yet. I was well armed and stronger by a dram than when I came in. I left open the windows, changing my seat to the long table, partly stretching myself along the bench to render me less conspicuous. From here I commanded a view of the front door and all within the room, being myself quite in the darkness.

Thus I waited for a full quarter of an hour with dead silence all about until the black brought in my food and a candle, setting the light at the end of the table farthest from me, pulling down the windows, and drawing the curtains, though it was far from being chilly. I was about to resent this disposition of the candle as a piece of impertinence, as it barely cast a shadow at that distance, when I suddenly considered the advantage of being in gloom, and so let it bide. I finished everything before me in short order, and, as though the man had anticipated my wants, my plate was immediately recharged with a liberal supply of ham and eggs, while a bowl of bonnyclabber was placed beside it.

Now, instead of withdrawing as he had done before, the black sat himself opposite me, with every wink the whites of his eyes snapping in the light of the distant candle. After watching my jaws gradually slow down as I drew near the end of the supply, and while I gave a long sigh of relief and comparative comfort, he leaned slowly forward and, speaking softly, said:

"Yous hungry, sah!"

"Slightly," I remarked; "I have e'en had a hard day of it."

"Who be you lookin' fo'?" he asked, abruptly.

"What's that to you, you black rascal?" I answered with a forced fierceness that made him grin. "Who is the host here?"

"Nat Burns, sah; he's away, sah. I looks to de house den. I t'ought you might be 'spec'in' some one, sah."

"Not I," I replied, having no desire to confide in a negro hostler. "Has anyone been here to-day?"

"Yes, sah," he answered, rolling his eyes. "Heap o' soldiers, sah. Deys makin' de house upsct all froo lookin' for somebody."

"Looking for whom?" I asked, now mightily interested.

"Two or free pussons an' a young gal, sah. But dey nebber finds dem here, no, sah! When am you goin' on, sah?"

I had hard work to restrain my curiosity about those who were being looked for. If the girl was Gertrude King, and I felt fairly sure of it, then she, too, had escaped arrest so far, though it gave me a strange feeling about the ribs to think that she might be suffering even as I had been. To his question I carelessly answered:

"Not to-night, at all odds." For I at once considered that if the house had been searched, it was the safest place I could find in which to abide.

"Ah, by the way," I inquired easily, "know you of a party named King?"

"King?" said he, rising and taking up the candle. "No, sah; no King, 'ceptin' the good King Gawge."

He held the candle so that for the first time I had a good look at him. I saw then that he was not a full-blooded negro, his hair being silky and waved, his nose straight, with fine nostrils, and his mouth lacking the thick lips as his skull lacked the prognathous development of the true African. His hide was abnormally black, however, and his tongue that of the southern darky improved by contact with the purer speech of the north. With all its fine points his face bore no signs of great intelligence, and as he looked at me it was almost expressionless.

I feared that if it ever had been, the tavern was now no longer a refuge for those of my party, for it seemed clear that Nick Stryker had lost the proprietorship, his place having been taken by one Burns (of whom I had never heard), whose very hostler was of rank tory breed. I was glad I had not put myself into the darky's hands, now even being afraid to ask for Stryker for dread of arousing suspicions against me.

"If yous boun' to stay all night, sah, I soon hab nice room, sah," he continued, while I was watching him, and taking the light with him, he went out with no apology for leaving me in the dark.

Being alone again, I filled my pipe and awaited his return with the means to light it. The difference betwixt the man I had been an hour since and was at that moment was amazing, so great is the power of nutriment to life both body and spirits. I was ready for another night's wandering if needs be, though I thanked my stars for lack of the necessity. Stretching myself along the bench, I was almost dozing from sheer comfort when I heard the tramp of horses in the yard, and the next minute the door opened and two boisterous voices rang through the room demanding lights and service.

The violent rattling of a chair on the floor, which one of the newcomers had used as a means of gaining attention, had hardly ceased when the negro returned with the candle. I could not see the faces of either of the parties from my position (which I deemed advisable to retain), naught but their legs showing, but for two they made a vast noise. The negro, without seeming to notice my apparent absence, placed bottles and glasses on the table farthest removed from mine, and the two, after ordering a meal, sat down and began drinking.

And without stint they drank, if one could judge by the sound of pouring. The single candle but broke the gloom of the apartment, though it was helped out by the moonlight, which streamed through the south windows and over the sanded boards. By it I made out that one of the party was a cavalryman, his muddy boots and short clothes proclaiming the fact, as well as the sabretasche that trailed on the floor by the side of his heavy sword. The other, also booted and armed, was not of the ranks, for his breeches were not embellished or of striking color (his coat I could not see), while the hat he flung under the table was but a nondescript slouch without a cockade.

That they had accidentally met was at once made plain by the first words that passed between them after the negro left the room.

"An' ye are from the north!" said the soldier. "It were a fine chance that brought us together, for I am nigh spent ah' must tha' traveled back on an empty belly had we not crossed."

"Have ye no news o' either o' them?" asked the civilian, earnestly, ignoring the former's remark.

"Nay, man. 'Tis the coldest scent I e'er put nose to. Scammell's an ass to think they fled together, an' twice an ass, too, to look for a flying man an' woman along the main highway! Have any of your gang it on news? This failure puts me 30 poun's out o' pocket, for I was to ha' that if I could but locate the woman; the man he feels sure of."

"Why of him?"

"That he's not tellin' the likes o' me, though I think he means to lure him."

"Lure him! the fool!" said the civilian. "The man who can overcome Scammell with an ewer, throttle Clinton an' run the lines on his fist is no bird that can be touched with salt. Faith! 'tis nothing but cold lead an' steel that can take him, an' I wish I might cross swords with him, for all his bigness."

"Well, by the piper!" broke in the soldier, banging his fist on the table, "I'm fain to meet him myself. I'd show him sword play—"

"Shut up, ye brag! He'd make but a pinch o' ye! Better stick to the woman, who'd come easy when ye sighted her! What's the outcome along o' Belden?"

"Belden!" said the soldier, with a laugh and an oath; "Clinton will ne'er forgive him for bringing forward such a mountain o' fraud. He's e'en a prisoner on board his own ship, an' Scammell is in the old man's bad books for havin' blabbed something to the girl—I wot not what. There's the devil's own muss below, made worse by the fact that both man an' woman ha' gone up to Heaven or downward, for no sign o' them is on the island, an' they ha' not had time to get off it by plain means."

"The girl had a pass, I was told."

"All passes were stopped, though not in time at the lower lines, to my thinking. I fancy the man is in the woods to the west, an' the lass hiding in the city."

"Well! well!" said the civilian, stretching his legs under the table and refilling his glass. "Here must I bide till the rest come up. To the devil with rebel spies, man an' woman! I wish I had known that Thorndyke was not Lounsbury when I had him unarmed. 'Twould ha' been worth a pile; but a bigger pile this day could I get him."

Now all this was mighty interesting, and I lay as still as the bench beneath me until the civilian's last remark. Something there was in his voice that struck me as familiar, while his reference to having met me made me more than curious. Carefully lifting my eye above the table's level, I beheld the card-sharper of the Bull's Head, his companion being a non-commissioned officer and a total stranger to me.

CHAPTER XII.

A FIGHTING QUAKER.

Here was I at last pinned down to close quarters. I had hoped they would eat, then drink themselves drunk and leave, but the sharper's intention of remaining all night, if necessary, together with the known hardness of head of the average trooper, made the hope a forlorn one. It seemed that I was to be confined to the bench for hours unless some chance should free me, and I had resigned myself to this when the black came in with food for the two, and at the same time the door reopened, there entering a man whom even in the dim light I knew to be of a different stripe than the others.

He was a Quaker, and so infirm that he walked slowly and heavily with the aid of a staff. Giving the two at the table a wide berth, he wended his way to the rear of the room and, seating himself on the settle, ordered a plain meal of milk and bread and butter.

There was nothing remarkable in the advent of a tired Quaker, but his appearance caused the sharper and his companion to draw their chairs together and whisper, though after a moment's close talking the former shouted across the room:

"Hello, sniffy! Where be thee from?"

There came no immediate answer to this, whereat the trooper swore roundly and repeated his fellow's question in a louder voice.

"I travel from the Kingsbridge and beyond, friend," was the final answer returned in a feeble treble.

"To where, then, thee son o' drab?" mimicked the gambler, as he put in his turn at insulting the old man.

"To a friend in the city—a Capt. Scammell, of De Lancy's regiment. Mayhap thee knows him?" was the innocent response.

But, innocent as it was, it had its effect on the two, who were at once more respectful in both tone and words.

"Ye'll not find him, then," volunteered the trooper. "He has a sore head an' a broken heart—the one from a scrimmage an' the other through loss o' his lady. Ha' ye seen aught o' a runaway beauty on yer travels—a tall young lass with a painted head?"

"Does thee mean a young girl with hair inclined to red?" asked the traveler, with something of interest in his voice.

"Ay, that same," returned the trooper, bringing his feet under him and half rising.

"Yea, friend. I met with a female, though scarce a beauty, and with hair as thee describes. She was tired and wan as she came from the woods near Day's tavern, by the Hollow Way, and asked me for victuals. But, friend, I was unprovided, and, indeed, in these times fear stragglers, be they male or female."

"Was the same tall an' fine o' skin, an' with dark eyes?"

"Ay, I think she was of proper height, and her eye was dark, if I do not err."

"'Fore God, an' I believe it the lass, Lowney!" said the trooper, starting up and for the first time giving the card-sharper a name. "I'm off on the scent. Where away did she go, old man?"

"Back to the woods, as I saw her," was the answer.

"What woods? In what direction?" hurriedly asked the redcoat.

"Thee knowest the woods and orchard where Washington worsted Howe on the heights of Harlem? That is the spot, friend. It strikes me she might be fair enough after food and rest. I would not have her harmed through me. Thee had—"

"Damn your thees an' thous an' Washington an' being worsted!" shouted the trooper, excitedly. "I'm off, Lowney. Tell the rest when they come. 'Tis a fair day that bid ye stop me for a sup in this place. I will requite ye yet. Give me a Quaker for truth an' good luck. Alloh, lad!" And with a rattle of metal he was out of the door, while in a moment I heard his horse putting from the yard full tilt.

As I listened to the Quaker's description of the girl, of whose identity I doubted as little as did the trooper, my heart sank within me. I considered the suffering she had undergone to make necessary her asking food of a stranger on the high road, and was fast getting to the point of leaving my place of concealment, dispatching the man Lowney, stealing his horse, overtaking the trooper, and rescuing the girl myself, and all without a thought of my own risk, when an accident put an end to this sudden dream of heroism and caused me to face stern facts.

'Twas but natural that I had taken a quick dislike to the Quaker, who had innocently been the means of setting a pursuer on the track of the patriotic girl, and 'twas also natural that I wished to see more of him than his legs and the butt of his staff. To the end of satisfying my curiosity, I lifted my head as before, but was seemingly less cautious with my foot, for, moving it unthinkingly, I tilted my sword, which must have but just balanced on the edge of the bench, and sent it crashing to the floor with (to me) a racket that might have been made by a falling house.

Both the Quaker and Lowney gave a start as the sharp sound echoed through the room, the former dropping the spoon he was carrying to his mouth, while the latter sprang to his feet and looked toward the darkened corner in which I had been hiding. The two candles in the large apartment gave but scant light, but, scant as it was, it proved enough for the sharp eyes of the gambler, who evidently caught sight of a face, for with an oath he cried: "What have we here—a drunkard or a deserter?" and advanced toward the table.

And now it appeared that I would be suddenly forced to do the very thing that but a moment before had been buzzing in my brain as only a dream. Concealment being no longer possible, I would face matters as they fell out, and trusted to put all into execution before help in the shape of the negro or others without might arrive. Ere Lowney had covered half the space betwixt us, I stooped for my sword, and, jumping to the bench and from that to the table, drew the blade.

As the advancing man beheld my figure loom suddenly on high, for the beams of the ceiling barely cleared my head, he stopped short and stepped a pace or two backward, drawing his sword the while, then with a voice which might have been heard a furlong, he shouted:

"By the great Jehovah! 'tis Donald Thorndyke, or his spook from hell! Are ye run to ground at last? If ye be no ghost, surrender in the name of the king!—Ho, old man! here is the devil himself; get to my holsters and fetch the firearms!—Hither, ye black rascal! help me hold him here! Help here, I say! Damn the closed door!—Boy! boy! Oh, what a pass is this!"

Waiting for no action on the part of the old Quaker, and hoping to forestall the negro, I leaped to the floor, and in an instant the swords of Lowney and myself were crossed in combat.

The onset was so sudden that it drove the man backward against his table, which, with the candle and earthenware, was upset, though the crash did not mar the fellow's guard. Taking advantage of the opening thus made, I sprang between him and the door, and then the battle began in grim earnest.

The light was far too uncertain to permit my putting into practice my well-worn stroke, and Lowney was much too wary and too skillful in fencing to allow me to at once come at him by any other method. I was fairly sure of tiring him and in the end beating down his guard, but at present I had enough to do in looking for his tricks and avoiding his furious lunges. In the half light of the room the fire flew bright from the steel in the energy of the parry, and my opponent hurried his fatigue by wasting breath in a constant string of oaths.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

CORSICA AND THE VENDETTA.

The Old Style Brigand Is Not Much in Evidence in Modern Times.

Persons who derive their ideas of Corsica as it is to-day from Prosper Merimee's novel "Colomba," will be doomed to some disappointment. Manners and customs have changed a great deal in the island since the date, shortly after the battle of Waterloo, when the gallant British officer and his daughter visited Colomba in her ancestral castle at Pietranera. The vendetta, which is the theme of that thrilling story, has greatly diminished. During the carnival we fancied that we had come upon a real instance of this picturesque barbarism. One workman killed another in a cafe, and then, in the expressive Corsican phrase, "took to the maquis," or brushwood, which covers a large portion of the island, and has, from time immemorial, been the refuge of outlaws and bandits. This legend subsisted for some days, and excited a new interest in life in Corsica, and quite a large demand for copies of "Colomba." But a conversation which I had with the juge d'instruction who had investigated the case proved that it was, after all, as he expressed it, a crime vulgaire, and not, as we had hoped, a crime corse.

We afterward had the satisfaction of seeing the malefactor led in chains between two mounted policemen on his way into Ajaccio, whereas the traditional bandit would have been fed and supplied with powder and shot by the country people, who would have rather gone to the stake than betrayed his hiding place to the authorities. Here and there vendetta may still linger in the island, but it has now become a means of attracting the tourist, who is invited to buy bloodthirsty looking knives and daggers, bearing such choice inscriptions as Vendetta Corsa; morte al nemico, ("death to the enemy"); or, even still more gruesome: Va diritto al cuore del nemico ("Go straight to the heart of the enemy"). These choice weapons form, together with gourds engraved with portraits of Napoleon, or the negro's head, which is the Corsican crest, the staple industry of Ajaccio.—Westminster Review.

A Narrow Squeeze.

A circuit paid a flying visit to a small English town not long ago, and the price of admission was sixpence, children under ten years of age half price. It was Edith's tenth birthday, and her brother Tom, aged 13, took her in the afternoon to see the show. Arrived at the door, he put down ninepence and asked for two front seats. "How old is the little girl?" asked the money taker, doubtfully. "Well," said Master Tom, "this is her tenth birthday, but she was not born until rather late in the afternoon." The money taker accepted the statement and handed him the tickets. But it was a close shave.—Chicago Times-Herald.

Nature Outdone.

An amusing instance of the extent to which a realistic artist may satisfy himself is told in the following story. Wilkins was the artist's name and he had painted a number of pictures of dead game which received considerable praise. Among them was a group of dead rabbits. These rabbits a critic commended in Wilkins' hearing as "remarkably true to nature." "Nature, sir!" replied the artist in his most pompous manner; "yes, I flatter myself there is more nature in those rabbits than you usually see in rabbits!"—Golden Days.